

TOWN OF WELLESLEY



MASSACHUSETTS

**BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS**

**COMMISSIONERS**

ELLEN KORPI, CHAIR

JEFFREY P. WECHSLER, VICE CHAIR

SCOTT BENDER, SECRETARY

**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS**

20 MUNICIPAL WAY, WELLESLEY, MASSACHUSETTS, 02481

PHONE: 781-235-7600

EMAIL: [dpw@wellesleyma.gov](mailto:dpw@wellesleyma.gov)

DAVID A. COHEN, DIRECTOR  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**DPW Begins Public Outreach After Tests Detect Elevated Levels of Chemicals in Wellesley Water**

***Morses Pond Water Treatment Plant Closed as a Precaution***

**May 6, 2021 (Wellesley, MA)** – In order to comply with new Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) regulations, the Wellesley Department of Public Works is conducting laboratory testing to determine the levels of human-made chemical compounds in Wellesley's drinking water. Recent results from initial tests performed in April 2021 by the Water and Sewer Division have confirmed elevated levels of PFAS6 compounds at the Morses Pond Wellfield, one of three treatment plants supplying drinking water to the Town. As a precaution, this week the Morses Pond plant was taken offline while further testing is done, and water for all Wellesley residents and businesses is currently being supplied by the Town's two other treatment plants, and the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA).

PFAS6, or **Per- and PolyFluorAlkyl Substances** are six identified chemical compounds that have been used since the 1950s to manufacture consumer products including stain- and water-resistant clothing, non-stick cookware, and personal care products. Due to health concerns, these compounds are no longer used in the United States, but PFAS are often referred to as "forever chemicals" as they stay in the environment for a long time and do not break down easily. As a result, PFAS may be widely detected in soil, water, air, and food. Most people have been exposed to them. Studies have shown that long-term exposure to high levels of PFAS can lead to adverse health effects. According to MassDEP "consuming water with PFAS6 above the drinking water standard does not mean that adverse effects will occur. The degree of risk depends on the level of the chemicals and the duration of exposure."

In October 2020, MassDEP approved new drinking water standards for the sum of PFAS6 allowed in drinking water, requiring that the maximum contaminant level not exceed 20 nanograms per liter (ng/L), also equal to 20 parts per trillion. One part per trillion is equal to a drop of water in 28 Olympic sized swimming pools. So far, more than two dozen community water systems in Massachusetts, including Wellesley's, have sources testing over 20 ng/L of PFAS.

According to DPW Director Dave Cohen, test results received by the Town on May 3 showed the Morses Pond water treatment plant with PFAS levels at 45.1 ng/L, or more than two times the acceptable DEP amount. The Town's other two treatment plants – Rosemary Brook and Longfellow Pond – had levels of under 11 ng/L, well below the maximum limit.

“While the reported levels are not yet a violation, we are being very cautious by taking Morses Pond offline. We are committed to providing consumers with safe and reliable water and are working to ensure the public water supply meets the State’s new drinking water standards,” said Cohen. “We will keep the public informed as we work with local and state officials to develop, design and implement the most prudent solution for our community.”

The DPW has put together detailed webpages with PFAS information. That information is available at <https://wellesleyma.gov/1652/PFAS-Information>

Officials are also working closely with the Health Department and MassDEP on public education and messages that will be sent to all residents. These materials include steps residents can take to determine their risk levels and recommendations to protect public health. It is important to note that boiling water will not remove PFAS. Consumers concerned about potential health effects of PFAS should consult a medical professional.

### **Next Steps**

The Water and Sewer Division will continue to test for PFAS and will report those results to the community, while working with MassDEP on ways to help reduce Wellesley’s levels.

As long as the Morses Pond treatment plant remains offline, the Town will tap into other sources to supply Wellesley’s drinking water. These include Wellesley’s other aquifers, along with water supplied by the MWRA from the Quabbin and Wachusett reservoirs. Tests on the MWRA water supply show only trace amounts of PFAS.

With the impending summer months and hot weather, Water Division Superintendent Bill Shaughnessy expects that the Town will need to increase its water conservation efforts. “As we work toward an appropriate treatment solution it is unlikely that we will have anything in place before the end of the outdoor watering season,” he said.

### **Questions and Additional Information**

For specific information and questions, please contact Water Superintendent Bill Shaughnessy at 781-235-7600 or email [dpw@wellesleyma.gov](mailto:dpw@wellesleyma.gov)

#### Town of Wellesley PFAS Information

<https://wellesleyma.gov/1652/PFAS-Information>

#### MassDEP Fact Sheet - Questions and Answers for Consumers

<https://www.mass.gov/media/1854351>

#### Massachusetts Department of Public Health information about PFAS in Drinking Water

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/per-and-polyfluoroalkyl-substances-pfas-in-drinking-water>

-END-